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ABSTRACT

Utah is a member of a nine-state consortium to study competency-based teacher education and certification programs. This paper presents an overview of the nationwide movement for competency-based teacher education, followed by a description of the situation in Utah. The State Board of Education is making an effort through the Teacher Education and Certification Section to encourage the development of preservice and inservice competecny-based teacher education and certification programs. The trend in Utah seems to be a grassroots approach exemplifying the shared responsibility concept of teacher certification, that is, involving as much as possible all of the partners in teacher education in the development of new programs. (Author/DDO)

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Utah State Board of Education
Roger C. Mouritsen
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THE IMPACT OF COMPETENCY-BASED TEACHER EDUCATION AND CERTIFICATION PROGRAMS IN UTAH

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State of the Art

Nationally, the movement to establish competency-based certification and teacher education programs is moving very rapidly. Almost every state has exhibited some interest in the concept and this has been expressed either by state departments or university college of education staff members or both. In some cases, state departments and/or legislatures have taken outright steps to establish guidelines which provide for pre-service and in-service competency-based certification. In the case of the State of Arizona the emphasis is strictly on recertification and teachers will be evaluated individually on how well the students under their direction have progressed. This is termed "product evaluation" and will not be done on a school basis, but on an individual basis. The establishment of educational consortia has been a popular approach for such states as Oregon, New York, Washington and Minnesota. In the typical consortium the state no longer approves the program of the university in teacher education, but approves the program submitted by the consortium. The consortium is usually made up of university staff, district administrators, members of local teacher organizations and sometimes state department personnel. Vermont has pursued this concept to the point that they have established a procedure in which a qualified individual can be recommended to the state department for certification from a district, not necessarily involving a teacher education institution. In other words, the district, not the teacher education institution has an approved program for certification. In many states, a great deal of difficulty is being experienced by state department staff in working with teacher organizations, and in some cases teacher's unions have become very active over the issue of competency-based certification. In New York State the teacher's union has declared that they favor competency-based programs if and when research will support them, but until such time they are reluctant to be held accountable for standards that appear to be no better than what we already have. They do not, however, discourage research in this area and are very willing to become involved. This position will, no doubt, permeate most of the teacher organizations and will probably have its effect in Utah.

Utah is presently a member of a nine-state consortium to study competency-based teacher education and certification programs. It is the opinion of Dr. Roger Mouritsen, State of Utah liaison with the nine-state consortium, that the State of Utah should move ahead as rapidly as possible with the implementation of competency-based programs, but should be very careful to involve public school teacher organizations, district administrators and university people in the development. It would be a mistake to mandate programs before all the stake holders in education are prepared for them and have had a hand in their development. It is recognized, however, that at some point state agencies must take the lead and make decisions which appear to be for the benefit of all concerned.

Pre-Service Education Programs in Utah

At the present time every institution in the State of Utah which trains teachers has done some work in the competency field. Perhaps the most exemplary program is the Weber State College Performance-Based Teacher Education Program. This program covers the professional component of education in both elementary and secondary and is in its third year of operation. The traditional course work-type program no longer exists and in its place students are exposed to a number of WILKITS (Weber Individualized Learning Kits),

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which modularize the students' learning. There are about 55 learning packages for elementary students and about 30 for secondary students. Although no in-depth evaluation has yet taken place, students and faculty are generally excited about the program. The more capable students respond with greater success and acceptance than do those of average or marginal ability. Clearly defined objectives and assessment based on the objectives appeal to the students. Excellence in performance appears to easily replace letter grades as incentives for student achievement. Students are more involved in decision making and show more initiative, drive and creativity than formerly. Relations between students and faculty are more open, friendlier and more cooperative. The faculty regards the new program as distinctly superior in preparing teachers to the former more traditional program. Some faculty miss the large group contact, but all recognize strength and value in the counselor/consultant arrangement and find it quite easy to adjust with success to this pattern. Administrators who have received Weber State graduates into their schools as fully certificated teachers have generally shown a positive reaction to them. Most feel that the Weber State graduates are able to effectively individualize instruction and in some cases are able to assist other faculty members in their efforts to individualize.

Brigham Young University staff have been dealing with competency-based teacher education for some years now and report success for their I-STEP program which continues to be termed experimental.

On the campus of Southern Utah State College the department of education staff have been evaluating their graduates over a period of three years and this coming summer hope to hold a workshop in which they will transform concerns of former students and present faculty into a competency-based teacher education program.

The University of Utah is working in the early childhood and media areas and have developed a superior educational supervisor's course based on competency.

At the present Westminster College is considering ways of developing their professional education program along competency-based lines and are in a unique position because of their size to draw in all of the discipline areas into their work. The department of education has excellent cooperation with all faculty on campus.

Utah State University is working hard in the area of elementary education to adapt a method of operation in their new program which will allow for competencies to be identified and evaluated.

In-Service Education Programs in Utah

The greatest effort toward the competency-based teacher education movement in Utah is in the pre-service area. However, many inroads are being made with in-service programs to identify competency criteria and to involve public school districts in this effort. Through the efforts of the State Education Agency the Granite School District has initiated a project to identify competencies required of junior high school teachers. This project will eventually provide in-service workshops to assist teachers in gaining necessary identified competencies. The project's first phase will be completed before June 30, 1973.

In conjunction with the State Board of Education, the Utah Education Association will initiate this year a pilot project in two Utah districts to upgrade competencies of elementary school teachers. The projects will be based on a modular in-service program which has been developed and tested and is in operation in Florida.

At the present time the State Board of Education is conducting a survey of districts in Utah to determine whether or not professional improvement committees are functioning. The purpose of these committees is to review recertification work of teachers and to make recommendations for the professional certificate. Thus far, it is evident from the survey that most districts consider recertification to be an automatic function; that is, there is very little questionning of whether or not a specific course or workshop satisfies the need of the individual teacher to upgrade competencies in any given area. It will be the goal of the State Board to institute a process whereby better evaluation of individual needs will be done.

Influence of State Board of Education

The Teacher Education and Certification Section of the State Board of Education is presently conducting several projects which will focus directly on the development of competency-based criteria for high school counselors, science teachers, German teachers, special education resource personnel, school psychologists and social workers. The State Board has already approved competency-based guidelines in the instructional media area which are now being integrated into university education programs. Through the State Advisory Committee on Teacher Education an effort has been made to encourage teacher education institutions to become involved in Interagency Councils for the Improvement of Teacher Education; that is, a consortium arrangement with districts including administrators and teachers, for better communication in the development and evaluation of teacher education programs.

In summary, the State Board of Education is making an effort through the Teacher Education and Certification Section to encourage the development of pre-service and in-service competency-based teacher education and certification programs. The trend at this point in the State of Utah seems to be a grass-roots approach exemplifying the shared responsibility concept of teacher certification; that is, where teacher education is concerned, all of the partners should be involved as much as possible in the development of new programs.